



(BOOK 3)

Firemen Artists 1940-45

Heroes with Grimy Faces

During World War II, a number of painters and designers were among the thousands recruited into the wartime UK fire service. These men participated in some of the most challenging operational situations that any fire fighter will ever face and they used their talents to produce paintings of these historic events. Anthony Kelly has compiled many of their best works into this superbly edited and produced volume that I consider is worth every penny of its £24.99 price tag. The firemen/artists got themselves organised during the war and they staged exhibitions of their work raising money for the fire service charities in doing so.

The paintings of the Blitz firefighting cover between them just about every operational activity, but in order to record the full picture of what life was like in the wartime fire brigade, many of the paintings show life as it was on the fire station. Although the title of the book is “Firemen Artists”, some of the paintings included in the book were the work of women. For example, one particularly eye catching image is a water colour drawing of a fire woman changing her clothes and the model in question hasn’t got a stitch on above the waist. It was painted by Julia Lowenthal.

I heartily recommend this book to anyone with an interest in art and/or the wartime history of the British Fire Service.

JOHN CRAIG

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